

Turkey, Our New Field



CONSTANTINOPLE

The Association in Turkey

Turkey Old and New

Turkey has been for a century the prey of the nations. Its strategic position between Europe and Asia has been the objective of hundreds of armies during the past centuries. Its capital, Constantinople, has been the captive city of barbarians and Christians, of Greeks and Tartars, of Catholics and Mohammedans. It has been the spiritual goal of thousands of human souls; its soil has been drenched with the blood of martyrs of successive faiths. Beneath the simpler plaster interior of the Mosque of St. Sofia are hidden ornate decorations painted in the time of Constantine.

The City

Constantinople is a city set on the hills. Its streets are paved with rough cobblestones like those of the cities of Russia, and among the womenkind to be seen is the veiled race of Mohammedans whose black or variegated colored veils present an inscrutable idea of the customs of the country. Four years ago in arriving in Constantinople one needed at least two official passports and was forced to leave behind all newspapers. Today many newspapers are issued and the watchword of the Young Turk party, "Liberty, Equality, Justice," meets one on every hand.



GREEK AND ARMENIAN NURSES

Population

In Constantinople and throughout Turkish cities is found as mixed a population as exists in lower New York and without a language of unification, a very babel of tongues is encountered. The store-keeper expects to speak at least three languages, and it is only the American who finds himself at a disadvantage (it being "either a deference to the superiority of English language or a concession to our ignorance" that English is the only tongue generally known to the Anglo-Saxon). Among cultured gentlemen French is largely employed as a medium of conversation.

Religions

Three religions hold the entire population so that in no sense can Turkey be called "heathen." People are either for Islam, Christianity or Judaism. Of the Christian church there are Catholics, Greek

Orthodox or National Church, Armenians or Gregorians, Jacobites, etc. The Moslem faith, although the religion of the rulers, has been superimposed upon the people and not assimilated. Hence we find groups of intensely nationalistic people forming a so-called nation. Even the calendar is confused. Christians have their Christmas Day, December 25; the Greeks celebrate January 8, and the Armenians, January 18.

Education

Each of the three religions, Mohammedan, Christian and Jewish, has its own system of education; although education for women is of very recent development and almost wholly within the Christian faith. So recent is the development of education that since this manuscript was begun, Moslems have opened their universities to Moslem women. This is without doubt the most revolutionary measure formulated by the new Turk party. There is every reason to conclude that it signalizes the abolishing of the harem. It precipitates a crisis in the women's life in Turkey that can be satisfactorily met only by the immediate presentation of the claims of Jesus Christ.

Constantinople is a city of many institutions of higher learning. The schools are crowded and many Moslems are turning to Christianity, their conviction from the recent struggle being that Christianity has a higher type of civilization to offer than that which they have known. The following quotation will serve to illustrate a type of Turkish ignorance. Inquiry was made in regard to the death rate of a certain city. The reply came: "Allah knows. Why should I seek to understand? Who am I that I



MAKING MACARONI FOR WINTER

should inquire? Children of the West spend their time in idle and presumptuous questioning. You should know that these things are not revealed to the children of men."

Women Students

On entering a group of students one will find that the young women of Turkey are "just like other girls"; but in reality within the confines of two or three educational institutions may be found Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, French, Jews, Servians, Albanians, Arabs and Turks. Many of the higher branches of learning are of necessity taught in either French or English, the possibility of which itself indicates a high degree of intelligence among the young women. Turkish is the most generally employed language among women. In the Christian schools for girls the American type of institution is largely followed, the largest school in Constanti-

nople having adopted the Wellesley plan of self-government.

The Place of the Young Women's Christian Association

Wherever the watchword of a country becomes "Liberty, Equality, Justice," the emancipation of women is inevitable, and the dawn of a new day for Turkish women has come. It is therefore most desirable that the Association, which has become the handmaid of the church in every place where women are coming to a new life, should be ready to grow with the development of the country.

It is noted that the work of the Association centers in the places where the Protestant missionaries are at work, and there are already established one student Association in Constantinople and eighteen other branches throughout Turkey, Asia and Syria. Some of the names of the cities are familiar: Smyrna, Beirut, Tyre and Jerusalem.

Dr. Patrick* indicated in an address at the World's Christian Student Conference in Constantinople the particular lines along which girl students need strengthening. There is a lack of comfort in their homes and lives, a lack of purposefulness, little planning for a life work and almost no means of support. For young women facing the present "era of efficiency" it is evident that these needs are crucial.

During a visit by Miss Frances Gage, formerly secretary of the Northwestern Field Committee, and later special worker in the foreign department at headquarters, the invitation of missionaries was so

* President of the Constantinople College for Women.



TURKISH LADIES

urgent and conditions so ready that Miss Gage offered herself for work in Turkey. In the fall of 1913 Miss Gage took up residence in Marsovan, to prepare for the position of traveling secretary for Turkey-in-Asia. Miss Anna Welles went to Constantinople at the same time for work among students in that city. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College, who has been connected with the British Student Movement and with the British American work in Paris. She attended the World's Student Christian Federation Conference in Constantinople in 1911. She is engaged in the study of the Turkish language. Already she has two Bible classes, one in English, one in French. In the first, the endeavor is to make a reality out of the far-away image of Christ. In the second, a more general course in characters of the Old Testament is studied.

The majority of students in the classes are Bulgarians. Other schools present equal opportunities

for Bible classes. All of the schools have an alumnæ and with work among students and alumnæ there will come a direct preparation for a city Association—a work that is obviously needed and urgent in the city.

NATIONAL BOARD
YOUNG WOMENS CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
600 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY
1914